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the actual security it affords make them seek it eagerly, and in spite of the lightness with which they seem to take it no marriage can be broken without some kind of mild stir and an early effort on the part of the principals to form another alliance, while their relatives try to patch up the old one. When Chantágn only felt that she *might* lose her husband she was already at my door asking whether I would be her next. However, unstable it may be, particularly in the beginning, marriage nevertheless is one of the ideal pillars of security on which the Kaingáng personality seeks ever to support itself. They have built their society on warm personal attachments, and anyone without such attachments makes them uneasy and perplexed. No one is spoken of more sadly than a mature person who is alone. "For a long time," said Vomblé sadly, "my father wandered around all over without a wife. At last when his brother died he married his wives." The women who did not try to interest me in themselves or in their children besought me to marry someone else—anyone—and one day even Yokó, a matron who was generally too shy to speak much to me, quizzed me uncomprehendingly on my bachelorhood and advised me to marry—not so that I could have someone to cook for me and mend my clothes, but just in order to be married. "Why? Why?" she kept repeating, "why do you live thus without a wife? Get a wife." "Whom shall I marry?" said I. "Marry anybody. Why go around unmarried?" Even the children found it hard to believe that I was single and they used to question me interminably: "Have you a wife in your country?" "Have you a sweetheart in your country?" "Will you marry her when you go back?" "Do you intend to marry?"

Once a couple are married they do not drop the liaisons formed before marriage. Their long training in philandering and the absence of an ideal of faithfulness have not suited them to the stability that marriage implies. Furthermore the absence of binding legal forms or big property stakes, as well as the knowledge that a meal can always be found at one's father's or brother's fire, that one's mother or sister-in-law is ready to cook the food and spread the bed, makes marriage brittle and its rupture not sharply felt. Yet, in an utterly contradictory manner, the Kaingáng believe that a man and woman, once they are "sitting together," belong to each other, and they use the same word to designate this possession as they use for the exclusive possession of material objects. This theoretical possessiveness comes into constant conflict with the actual sharing in which the young people have taken part all their lives. The young man who for years before his marriage has dallied with the wife of anyone from his father to his second cousin, who has day in and day out enjoyed adultery with an equally delighted adulteress, decides suddenly, once he is married, that his possession should be exclusive. "I left my wife," Yuvén said to me, "because she took Kanyahé and Kundágn as lovers. She sleeps with everyone. All the women

IV

Polyandry and Joint Marriages

152 The Kaingáng are ridden by hunger and swayed by the strength of their libidinal ties, and they have in some degree overcome the one by building on the other. Food and sex have become so closely interwoven in the Kaingáng mind that they even use the same term for eating as they do for coitus. In human relationships the overt, articulate emphasis is always upon food, and the strongest bond that one man can have with another is that he suffered hunger with him. When the soul of the deceased is sped on its way the dead man's relative, tormented by the fear that he might be taken along by the ghost, shouts as he pounds the dead body on the chest: "Leave me and go! You and I suffered great hunger together; so leave me and go!" Now, since men are the principal sources of food supply, talk of marriage centers primarily on their value as providers for the girls and their parents and brothers and sisters. When a man speaks of his marriage he does not discuss the qualities of his wife nor the material advantage to him of the alliance, but of feeding his wife and her relatives. "First I married Kulú," said Vomblé. "Then I left her and married Kulá. My father's brother sent her to me. At the same time Wanenggló sent his sister Waikíli to me, but I sent her to my brother Ndíli. When she left him he married Kulú. I lived only with Kulá. I went hunting with Waikíli but sent her to Ndíli. Two women have many children, and my wives had no families that were capable of giving me food. Yet I had to feed my children. I was hungry. My father [Thunder Storm] had three wives, but they had brothers who could give him food. I have to give things to Kulá's brothers and sisters, but they could give nothing because they were so small. Waikíli had only one brother."

Through her marriage Kulá's family gained Vomblé as an ally in the

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since he had clubbed the deer he should have the skin. But when I went to hand it to him, Ndili said, "I want the skin," to which Dung replied, "He wants it; so give it to him." The willingness to yield to aggressiveness, coupled with the indifference to trouble unless it faces one squarely, operates to reduce enormously the number and severity of conflicts within the extended family.

The obsessive interest of the Kaingáng in destruction and murder was all externalized against the "other people," and it was this ability to externalize their obsession that was in part responsible for whatever coherence and security the families preserved. The overpowering urge toward destruction that manifests itself still in the wanton gashing of trees and the killing of the tiniest bird that happens to perch on a limb where stick or stone may reach it is never directed inward against the family but always outward. The function of the feuds, therefore, was twofold, for they served both to gratify the need to destroy and to direct it away from the extended family; and this duality contributed to their perpetuation.

The overwhelming bulk of Kaingáng folklore is murder stories—murder committed in every imaginable way and on all relatives except sons. Stories begin with murders committed for no reason and rehearse over and over again the whole wearisome theme of treachery and retaliation. The interest in the feuds has suffocated any other mythological theme, and instead of the elaborate variations on widespread mythological elements that are so common among many primitive peoples we find that when these elements actually do appear in Kaingáng folklore they are bare, fossilized, neglected plots which the literary imagination has never developed. The one elaborate art form that the Kaingáng have, their folklore, is overwhelmingly concerned with their own destruction.

Perhaps the best proof of the obsessive nature of this trait lies in a split within an extended family which occurred after the Kaingáng were localized on the reservation and which culminated in the murder of Thechá. For years the Kaingáng had committed no murder. Their vendetta enemies had been killed or driven far away, and now the group that had lived in harmony for generations was isolated from the dangers of attack and settled peacefully on the reservation. But Thechá took to saying that he wasn't afraid of anyone, and he was angry at everyone; so "since he was angry with them they became angry with him." They decided to kill him, and one of the plotters was his own first cousin, his father's sister's son, Kovĺ. Now Thechá was a most unusual Kaingáng, for he could not swim. That simplified matters, and one day when he was crossing the river with a number of people—"nine people and five women," as one informant put it—"the canoe tipped over." Nobody tipped it, for such baldness of statement would offend Kaingáng good taste, but "the canoe tipped over" and

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Thechá went to the bottom. "He stayed there six days and when they brought him up he was dead!" Thechá paid the penalty for being too *weikayá*, but it must be borne in mind that this is the first time in two hundred years that such a murder has occurred within the extended family on any grounds whatever.

It was this same obsession with murder that led Yakwá to say to me one night, "Kovĺ wants to kill me," because he wanted to kill Kovĺ. The Kaingáng have a long tradition of slaughter, and twenty years have passed since they murdered their last Brazilian. When they can they vent their urge to destruction on dogs and on trees, but they occasionally need a human object. The last one was Thechá—the next may be Kovĺ.

[p. 64 is blank]

763 Ndíli handed her some medicine, a pounded
75 herb mixed with water, and she tried to force that between the child's lips; but it only trickled down its chin. Some of the women sought to help her by heating their hands over the fire and laying them on the baby.

763 When it seemed that the child must surely die, Waipó left camp to call the others of our hunting party, for when the ghost-souls are about they may take away the living; and the Kaingáng feel the need for each other's protection and "live piled up."

When I climbed into my hammock that night, there had been a lull in the weeping, but I was awakened several hours before dawn by the frantic keening of Waikomé. One by one, others joined her, and I knew then that the baby was dead. As I watched, the emotion gradually grew more intense; and some went to join the group mourning around the child. There was no play-acting here, no singling out of those whom relationship obliged to weep from those who could just look on. Those who were not affected kept aloof and performed their daily tasks, but those who felt an identification with the bereaved parents mourned with them. Ndíli's second cousin sat with his arm around him and wept, but Ndíli's brother seemed entirely untouched and soon went off to get honey. At last, late in the morning, the parents took up their little bundle and went away, and the sound of their keening came back to us through the forest.

795 That day no one went hunting even though there was no meat in camp.
763 Toward noon Waipó said to me, his voice intense with fear: "You'd better pack your things, because we're going away from here right away. We thought we would stay and kill another tapir, but the baby died; and now we have to move." Who knows what might have happened if they had remained? The ghost-soul of the baby might have taken someone along with it or the ghost-soul which had killed it might kill again. It really does the Kaingáng no good to flee from the ghost-soul, for although it has a tendency to lurk about the place where the bones of its dead body are buried, it also is nomadic like the Kaingáng and may dog their footsteps wherever they go.

763 If we think of death among ourselves and the demonstrations that
152 accompany it among the less inhibited members of our own society; if we disregard for a moment the wild surroundings, the rhythmic keening, the fear of the ghost-soul, and even, perhaps, the useless medicine that was forced between the choking child's lips (although, Heaven knows, that too might be easily duplicated in our society), we cannot but see a striking resemblance between the grief of Waikomé and Ndíli and the members of their group and similar displays in our own society. Among ourselves, anger is generally thrust into the background and often disappears entirely when grief is sincere, but among the Kaingáng it pervades the entire scene and manifests itself in an irritability that may easily become anger. It is

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difficult to talk to many of the Kaingáng on these occasions because they are so easily enraged, and the ethnologist had best hold his tongue and try to appear as small as possible. In death the Kaingáng feel a threat to their security. As they put it, "We are afraid of the ghost-souls; so we come together and live piled up." As in the feuds, no one knows when the deaths will cease. The presence of death lays bare the very fiber of the Kaingáng personality, for it is in terms of this emotional amalgam in which anger and fear are indistinguishably fused that we must understand all of their behavior in times of stress.

In 1918 when the first wave of the grippe struck the Kaingáng, killing them in such numbers that their bodies lay about unburied until the dogs ate them, Thunder Storm rose up in his rage and fear and beat the air and trees with a club. "When disease came," said his son to me, "my father beat the trees because he was afraid of the supernatural beings (*nggĭyúdn*). He said, 'If I see you, I'll kill you. You are *waikayú*[1] and kill us all the time. So if I see you come to me, I'll kill you! The Brazilians kill my relatives; so out of revenge I destroy them when I see them! When I see them, I kill them, and I'll do the same to you—when I see you, I'll kill you!' He spoke thus as he beat the trees." Nothing could express this side of the Kaingáng character and world-view better. Here is condensed the Kaingáng frantic fear and anger at the forces of death, the equation of the supernatural with any other enemy, and the identification of the situation created by death with the vendetta tradition and revenge.

The Kaingáng not only fight with death; they also fly from it. That is why Waipó told me that we must move on when Ndíli's baby died, and that is why old Kakthí moved out of her house when the grippe descended again in 1933. "Why has she left her house?" said I to her son-in-law. "She is afraid of our sickness. She said, 'If I stay there, I'll get sick'; so she went away. She is in the forest to get away from it. She went to another place so our sickness would not see her." Poor Kakthí fled in vain, for she soon fell ill and died. "Her [dead] husband called her, and that is why she died. Our ghost-souls led her off, and that is why she died. Her husband's ghost-soul led her away, and that is why she died. She lay there telling about it, and then she died. The supernatural beings and her husband's soul led her away. He [her husband] led her away so that he might go with her."

The ghost-soul loves and pities the living whom it has deserted, but the latter fear and abhor the ghost-soul. The ghost-soul longs for those it has left behind, but they remain cold to its longing. "One pities one's children and therefore goes with them [i.e. takes them] when one dies. One loves [literally, lives in] one's children, and dies and goes with one's children, and one [i.e. the child] dies." The dead pity those they have left alone with

[1] Vicious, aggressive.

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killed you. When they killed you, I wandered around suffering, but you come to call me!" When the ghost-soul at last went away, she was "all green. She stood there without saying anything. He [her husband] said to her, 'Why are you green?' But she said nothing. She sat down holding on to a post. Then he asked if she was sick—if she had a pain in the belly. But she did not talk. Wanenggló [her husband] asked her whether she had seen a ghost-soul. Probably she saw a ghost-soul. But she did not say anything." Like vendetta enemies, the ghost-souls are "other things"—it is the only category the Kaingáng have for those who dwell outside the limits of the extended families—and for people in this category they know only one emotion, fear-anger.

When the Kaingáng are drunk, their malevolent and fearsome impulses rise to the surface, and the memory of death plays its part in this. Festa time, when the beer troughs are brimming with the steaming, sourish, honey beer, is a special occasion for remembering the dead. It is also the occasion when recollections of adultery unpunished or of slights unrequited surge into consciousness. While some dance, sing, or brawl, others sit around the edge of the dance circle with their heads in their hands and tears streaming down their faces, and their sobs and high rhythmic keening mingle with the noise of quarreling and disordered singing. When they have done with their hour or so of weeping, they rise and fill their baskets or gourds with beer and join in the festa. No recollection of the dead can occur without unleashing fear, and fear cannot be liberated without the eruption of anger, so the memory of the dead only adds to the disruptive forces that are set in motion by the beer. The more one knows about the Kaingáng, the more one is struck by the extent to which the very roots of their being have been undermined and torn by impulses to violence. This is all the more amazing when we remember what affectionate people they seem to be—how much they love to multiply a hundredfold all kinds of personal attachments. Nevertheless, when drunkenness uncovers the Kaingáng personality, it does not bubble over in rivulets of tenderness, but pours out in torrents of violence. The only outlet is murder, and that is why festas, if not actually the scene of murders, used to be almost always the forerunners of raids on the Brazilians or on vendetta enemies. The Kaingáng themselves understand, in a way, what the festa meant to them, for they say, "We had festas in order to go to attack the Brazilians." Of course not every festa is characterized by violence, but many are.[3]

[3] Although the Kaingáng held an old-time beer festa at my request the aboriginal beer troughs have been superseded by jugs of sugar cane whiskey, and the tumultuous singing by the music of an accordion played by a white man. These changes, however, have not curbed the essential temper of the Indians, and fights still occur at festas.